

The President's Daily Brief

October 18, 1976

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Top Secret 25X1

Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category 5B(1)(2)(3)
declassified only on approval of
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

October 18, 1976

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At Annex we discuss the origins of the leftist movement in China and trace its fortunes during the last 25 years.

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CHINA: *The Chinese Communist Party Central Committee plenum, which is presumed to have been held last week in Peking, appears to have ended on Friday.*

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A statement on changes in the Chinese leadership decided by the meeting seems likely soon.

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One notice specifically stated that major political actions were imminent.

Peking will probably announce that Hua Kuo-feng is party chairman and may name new members and promotions within the Politburo. The statement may also officially disclose the arrests and fate of the four leading leftists.

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LEBANON: *The six-member "mini-summit" convened in Saudi Arabia yesterday following a round of informal meetings on Saturday. Syrian President Asad, responding to a request from the Saudis, has called a temporary halt to the Syrian offensive in Lebanon, ostensibly to facilitate negotiations at the summit.*

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ANGOLA - SOUTH AFRICA:

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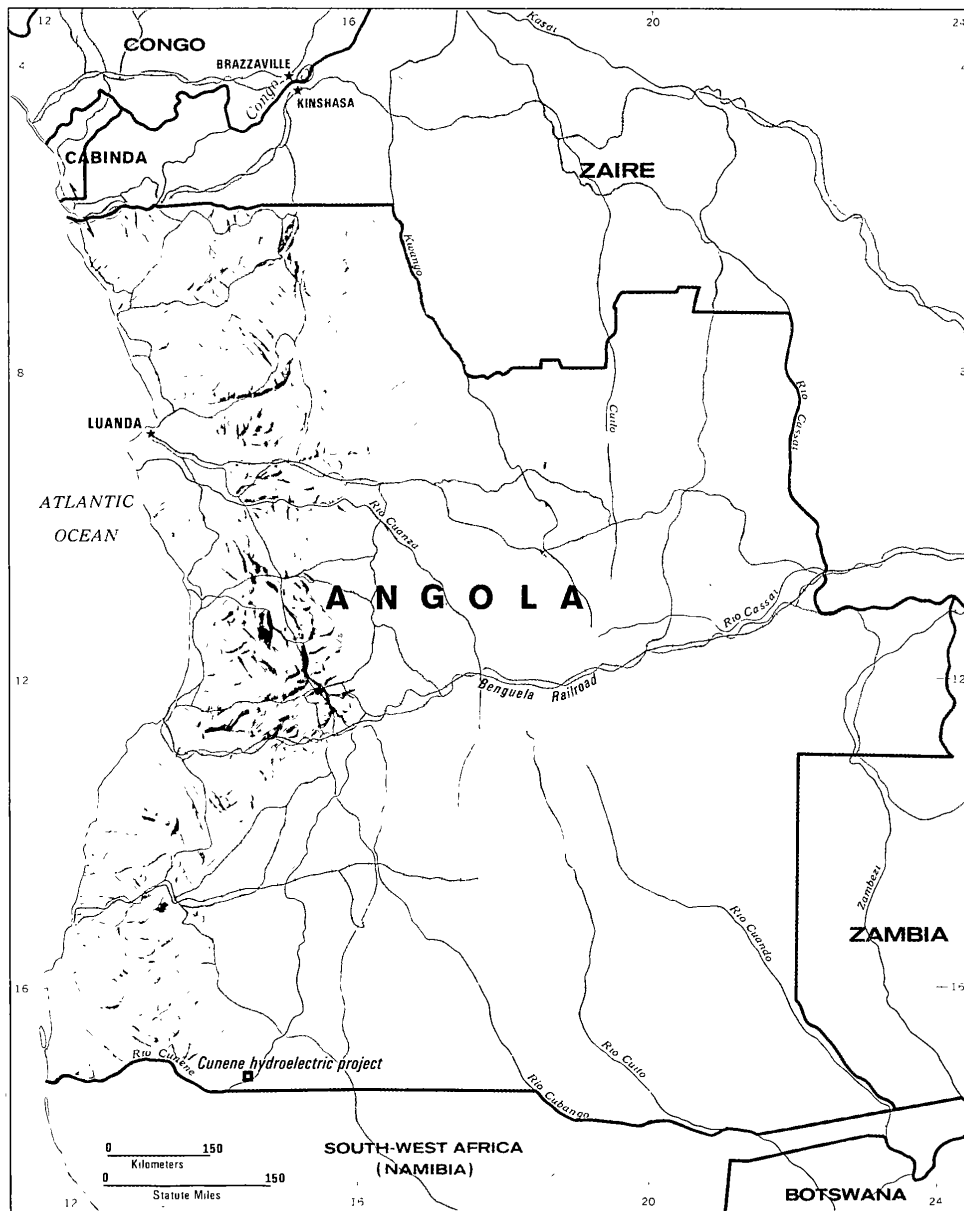
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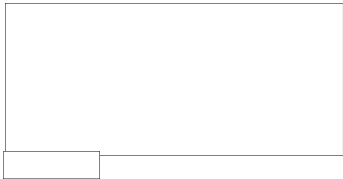
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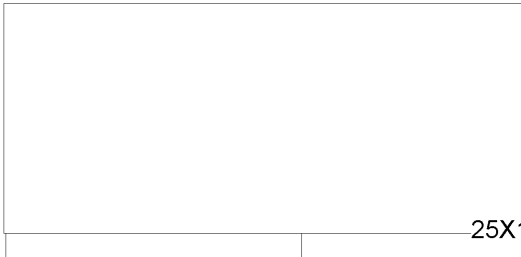
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NOTES

The six members of Western Europe's joint float announced yesterday a realignment of the parities at which their currencies are officially maintained against one another.

At the start of trading today, the German mark will be revalued upward by 2 percent against the Belgian franc and Dutch guilder, 3 percent against the Swedish and Norwegian crowns, and 6 percent against the Dutch crown.

Anticipation of the realignment has caused hectic trading conditions from time to time in recent months in world currency markets. Yesterday's move, however, followed a week of relative calm and apparently took most traders by surprise.

* * *

Robert Mugabe, chief spokesman for the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union--which fields most of the insurgents active against the Rhodesian government--is likely to be elected president of ZANU later this week.

Mugabe, rather than the current president of ZANU, Ndabaningi Sithole, was invited by the British to the conference that opens in Geneva next week to prepare Rhodesia for legal independence under black majority rule.

Overshadowing Mugabe in popularity among ZANU's guerrillas is Josiah Tongogara, now on trial in Zambia for assassination of one of his rivals. The Zambian government is said to be considering his release because Tongogara's acceptance of terms reached at Geneva is crucial if a cease-fire or de-escalation of guerrilla operations is to be achieved.

The two other black nationalist leaders who will participate in the Geneva conference are Joshua Nkomo of the Zimbabwe African People's Union and Bishop Abel Muzorewa of the African National Council.

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CHINA

Mao Tse-tung, writing some ten years ago about the issue of factionalism within the Chinese Communist Party, implied that whatever the political balance at any given time, neither the left nor right wing of the party could ever be totally eliminated. This judgment was almost certainly correct.

Broadly speaking, those officials who--in the course of the party's growth and conflict with the Kuomintang and the Japanese--tended to emphasize organizational discipline, problem solving, and the practical issues of governing and building a modern economy coalesced into the party's right wing. Those who insisted that the party could not simply develop into a governing class, who believed that the rapid development of a technological elite would undermine ideological purity, and who felt that ideological indoctrination and the nurturing of mass enthusiasm were the keys to the solution of China's numerous economic and other problems formed the core of the party's left wing.

Great Leap Forward

Throughout most of the 1950s and the early 1960s, the right wing was dominant. A marked exception, however, was the Great Leap Forward of 1959. Spurning close party supervision for techniques of mass enthusiasm and introducing a rather hysterical style of leadership, it seemed distinctly "leftist" in orientation. As the campaign progressed, control procedures broke down, the movement ran into difficulty, and in the wake of crop failures China suffered several years of famine and economic dislocation.

As a result of the Great Leap, the bureaucrats in control of the party machine were reinforced in their distrust of mass agitation techniques and of "unreliable" subordinate cadre. Moreover, many senior party officials came to distrust the judgment of Chairman Mao, who had backed the Great Leap experiment. Low-level officials resented the blame placed on them and ideologues chafed at the new emphasis placed on techniques that "would work."

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Cultural Revolution

Over the years, a variety of tensions developed--personal, institutional, and ideological--that Mao exploited when he reasserted his authority over party bureaucrats in the mid-1960s.

To humble the party machine, however, he particularly used two groups. One was composed of idealistic but discontented youth in the institutions of higher learning, who were to form the core of the Red Guard formations. The other included the then defense minister, Lin Piao, and a number of his close associates in the central military establishment who were at that time in open revolt against the party bureaucrats.

The resultant explosion--the Cultural Revolution--tore the party to pieces and deeply rent the social and economic fabric of the country. This chaotic political movement, which ran from the spring of 1966 to the autumn of 1968, is the central reference point of all subsequent political developments in China. Political fissures and personal animosities engendered by the movement have never healed.

The period from the summer of 1966 to the summer of 1967 was the high-water point for the left; it has been in slow but irregular decline ever since.

Leftist attacks on provincial military administrators turned many of these individuals against the ideologues and their allies and also caused a split between Lin Piao and his Peking associates on the one hand and the provincial satraps on the other. Pressure from the military and from Chou En-lai, plus the "objective" fact of increasing chaos throughout the country, led to a closeout of the Cultural Revolution in 1968.

Institutionalism of Left Wing

Despite this major setback to the leftist cause, leftist strength, still considerable, was now institutionalized.

As party committees were reconstituted throughout the country, young "radicals" shared power, although usually in a subordinate position, with military,

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bureaucratic, and party figures. The ninth party congress, meeting in the spring of 1969, elected to the Politburo three civilian leftists who had achieved prominence during the Cultural Revolution--Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chiao, and Yao Wen-yuan--as well as Lin's military associates. Two other leftists and Lin himself were elected to the Politburo standing committee.

The leftist position, however, was weaker than it seemed. Ironically, the left, which put its faith in the "masses," had in fact alienated much of the populace through its excesses in the Cultural Revolution and its evident inability to manage the country during its period of ascendancy. Moreover, the provincial military remained deeply hostile. A reaction quickly set in, and orthodox management returned to power.

Continuing Decline of the Left

Lin Piao, finding "leftism" a weak reed on which to lean, now attempted to make common cause with his estranged regional military commanders--an effort that led to his attempted "coup" in the autumn of 1971. The elimination from the Politburo of Lin's close military associates in the wake of his death left the remaining top leftists--Chiang Ching, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan--isolated on that body.

Weakened in the provinces, the leftists retained firm control of the educational and cultural spheres--areas about which they were particularly concerned but which were not nearly such important sources of real power as control of the party and government machinery--and somewhat less firm control over the propaganda apparatus.

The leading leftists still retained a somewhat equivocal relationship to Mao Tse-tung. In 1970 and again after the fall of Lin Piao, the Chairman had dissociated himself from the leftist leaders--particularly his wife, Chiang Ching--but he still found them a useful counterweight to pressures from the military and from the conservative bureaucrats, now led by Chou En-lai. In these circumstances the leftist trio retained veto power over numerous high-level decisions and appointments.

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The onset of Chou En-lai's illness--known in the upper echelons of the Chinese leadership by 1973--tended to upset the tentative balance that had been established following the fall of Lin Piao. Officials dependent on Chou were uncertain of their future. The left, in preparation for the inevitable succession and in recognition of its own relative weakness, began a flirtation with the still disgruntled military which, although never very successful, continued until October 6 and 7, 1976.

A Standoff

The tenth party congress, convened in the summer of 1973, was probably primarily designed to deal with the succession problem. The result was largely a standoff. Although Chou and his allies lost little ground, the leftists were able to exclude Teng Hsiao-ping, "rehabilitated" the previous spring, from the Politburo. Wang Hung-wen, a young Shanghai protege of Chang Chun-chiao, was elected to the third position in the party hierarchy. The one remaining military man on the Politburo with leftist sympathies, Li Te-sheng, was elevated to the standing committee.

The congress actually settled nothing and was immediately followed by the so-called anti-Confucius campaign--a feuding between left and right. But by the end of 1974, the left had been turned back.

Teng Hsiao-ping

At a party plenum in late 1974, Teng Hsiao-ping was elected to the Politburo standing committee and was made chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army. Li Te-sheng was dropped from the standing committee.

The ascendancy of Teng Hsiao-ping, however, raised in acute form the issue of the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution. Teng--the only "rehabilitated" official on the Politburo--was a continuing provocation to the left. Moreover, he made no attempt to disguise his contempt for the Cultural Revolution and all its works. In addition, anticipating Chou's coming death, he pressed ahead at great speed with programs reminiscent of the early 1960s.

In the process, Teng alienated significant military leaders--who stood aside when the left renewed its attack on him after Chou En-lai's death.

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Following the fall of Teng Hsiao-ping, leftist leaders opened a general attack on the many party officials "rehabilitated" since 1969--a threatening gesture that merely served to unite the bureaucrats in opposition to the leftists. Further, the leftists attacked Teng's military policy even while seeking alliances with military commanders.

Fall of the Leftist Quartet

The continued leftist agitation from late 1973 probably convinced considerable numbers of influential figures in the party and military establishments that political stability could not be achieved in China unless the leftist leaders were removed from positions of influence. The fall of the leftist quartet was probably inevitable; only the timing was a surprise.

It still is not clear whether the leftist leaders attempted a desperate move in early October or whether the right--above all the military--undertook a pre-emptive one. In either case, the lightning purge of October 6 and 7 clearly revealed the relative weakness of the left in real power terms.

Residual Leftist Strength

At the same time, leftist strength almost certainly has not vanished. Hua Kuo-feng recently claimed that the Chinese Communist Party has 30 million members. If, as a conservative estimate, a quarter of this number is leftist in outlook, such members would total seven and a half million--a sizable pressure group. Even if the arrest of the leftist quartet should be followed by a purge of some 100,000 to 200,000 followers--a number comparable to those purged during the Cultural Revolution--a huge body of leftists would remain to reassert themselves as other pressures build in China.

If a new round of struggle develops in the near future, it is likely to be between civilian party members and a newly confident and assertive military. Over the longer term, if the return to the methods and practices of the 1950s and 1960s continues, pressures will probably build again within the Chinese political system in reaction to the rigid bureaucratic "command style."

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